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A LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT.

We are glad that Westmoreland Davis and the Virginia State Farmers' Institute are advocating the creation of a legislative reference department for the assistance of the General Assembly of Virginia. For more than a year The Times-Dispatch has been pointing out the desirability of such an establishment, and we believe that its beginning is near at hand.

Just what is meant by a legislative reference bureau? Let us use Mr. Davis's excellent definition: "It is an adjunct of the library system of a state and furnishes contemporary literature, books and newspaper clippings upon all subjects which are likely to be of interest to legislators in the exercise of their legislative functions. It further provides a skilled draftsman who prepares in proper form, if so desired, bills that are to be introduced for passage. It is non-partisan, and places before the legislators the data and the experience to be derived from similar legislation throughout the world."

The use of such an institution can best be indicated by a concrete case. A farmer says he has been elected to the General Assembly. He has had no experience in lawmaking and knows little, if any, law. He wishes to introduce a bill effecting a certain purpose, but does not know how to translate his ideas into legal forms. He does not know whether his proposition is constitutional or not. He does not know whether like measures have worked successfully in other states.

Where can he get the information and aid he requires?

Under the present system in Virginia, he will have to rely on some experienced fellow member and intrude upon his time, and even then he cannot get all the information he desires.

A legislative reference department would inform and assist him fully. Its draftsman would draw his bill for him in legal language, would model it along the lines of successful bills on the same subject in other states and would frame it in the light of general legislative experience. In such a department the legislator would find easily all available information needed to equip himself for argument in support of his bill. He would get all the practical light on his proposition that he required. He would have the ready and free counsel of an expert in law, economics, political science and social science.

Wisconsin was the first state to have such a department. The original annual appropriation was \$1,500; in 1911, it was \$2,000. This one of the many splendid new ideas of Wisconsin has been adopted in seventeen states and three cities. Thus far, as a resolution passed at the 1913 session of the General Assembly, Governor Shadon has appointed a commission to study the workings of legislative reference bureaus with a view of establishing a like institution in Georgia.

"What Virginia needs is constructive legislation," correctly says Mr. Davis. "We have too long followed the shadow and lost sight of the substance. We need legislation that will have to do with the practical problems of our life and enable our people to hold to their material welfare and secure for themselves an increasing prosperity, whereby more and more they may secure the necessities of life and some of its luxuries. No man can be made rich by legislative enactment, but good government must provide opportunity for all."

Cloud-government depends largely upon enlightened legislation, and that end will be promoted by the creation of a legislative reference bureau. The representatives of the people ought to be as well equipped and informed for the discharge of their duties as are the lobbyists and representatives of special interests.

The cost of establishing and maintaining such an institution would be slight. The service it would render to the State would return tenfold the amount of the expense incurred. The Virginia State Library has already done work in this direction, and with a reasonable appropriation could make this department to its already wide activities. Much of the data needed already exists in the State Library.

By all means Virginia should have a legislative reference bureau.

Dr. Jacques Loeb, who raises frogs in his laboratory, would devote the time to raising beefsteaks he would be more widely popular.

With the finest milk in the country and practically no diphtheria, Richmond is not only safe for babies, but is the place babies should be brought for health.

In five months Hobson has spent ten days in his seat in the House of Representatives, but he has plenty of follow-holders or a like record.

COLLECTOR MALONE.

As is to be expected of an ex-university professor and executive, President Wilson has much admiration for and faith in young men. He has appointed many of them to high places in the government. Cases in point are those of his secretary, Joseph P. Tumulty, Commissioner of Corporations; Joseph E. Davies, and Henry S. Breckinridge, Assistant Secretary of War, who was graduated from the Harvard Law School just a little more than three years ago. Doubtless, the President recalls that the most ardent and vigorous workers for his nomination by the Democratic party were young men who thought nothing of sitting up all night with a delegate from Nebraska or California on the mourner's bench.

The President's latest appointment, that yesterday of Dudley Field Malone, to the collectorship of the port of New York, is an instance of his valuation of the efforts of young men who sought to aid him in the discouraging days when Clark and Underwood loomed so large upon the horizon. Malone, a very young fellow, interested himself in the Wilson cause, and for weeks devoted his time and energy to advancing the interest of a man he hardly knew at all. A son-in-law of Senator Otterman of New York, Malone might have been expected to stay in harmony with the New York machine, but he did not. When the convention rolled around, and the revengeful opposition of James Smith, Jr., began to manifest itself, it was Malone who challenged Smith to a personal combat for the settlement of the issue. Malone worked early and late at Baltimore for Wilson's nomination, and after it had been effected, was the special guest of the Democratic nominees on his first long tour. When Wilson came into office, Malone was made Third Assistant Secretary of State. He was yesterday promoted to succeed John Purrey Mitchell in the most desirable appointment in New York, a position of much prominence and influence.

Thus does the impulsive faith and the ardent loyalty of youth find compensation.

NOT GUILTY.

This is a victory for Belliss, but a greater victory for the Jewish race in Russia," said Belliss's leading counsel yesterday, when his client was found guilty of the ritual murder of Andrew Yushinsky. Dissolved. That the Committee on Public Buildings, Properties and Utilities of the city of Richmond be requested to recommend that the present ordinances relating to gas and water bills be changed to make the tenants responsible for gas and water used by them, rather than the property owners."

There seems to be a doubt as to what is now the law. Yet the point remains: better health conditions depend on plenty of water. When the tenant is responsible and fails to pay, the water is turned off. His residence then becomes a source of danger to the whole city. In the case of gas, he merely does without, to his own inconvenience, and if he wants to do without, the landlord has no duty.

Water is quite another thing. It has social aspects. The tenant should not be permitted to do without water, because of the possible effect on other people. This risk is best eliminated if the landowner bears the responsibility for water.

There seems to be a gap between theory and practice here.

THE COLD SNAP.

What the man on the street—or the woman in the house—is thinking of now is the first real cold weather. We may jest about the weather, scoff at it as a theme for conversation, try to rise superior to it, but there it is, democratically hitting rich and poor. Human vanity is chastened by the thought of what a few degrees of heat or cold can do.

The first cold snap is news, because it is the first. It has all the vividness of contrast. We call a sharp frost with snow, a blizzard to-day, and by January we will laugh and enjoy such pleasantries. At that though, the November cold is important enough. It means that the whole economic life of a community is affected. We have to provide heat. The long-postponed overcoat has to be forthcoming, whether or not. The food supply changes. Salads and cold-stuff no longer "hit the spot." We have an appetite for fats, and need lots of sugar to keep us warm. Even the light bill runs up as we stay indoors more, and the days dwindle in sunlight.

The whole of human life takes on a sharper, keener edge. We realize that we have forced ourselves pretty far north on the globe, and that we have to work to make up for the splendid warmth and plenty we deserted in the tropics. We do more work partly because we feel more like working, partly because we must, to supply the elemental needs.

One blit sign of cold weather is the increase in transportation. The columns of the paper are filled with stories of wrecks and delays by land and sea. In the country the roads are harder to travel on. The outdoor worker feels the sting of cold. The farmer, the railroad man, the drivers of trucks, dairymen and every cog in the great distribution system have to meet new demands on strength and courage. It is a wholesome thing to recall this when the office gets a bit chilly.

The speedy result of cold weather is that poverty rots its head among us. When Nature ceases to be warmly benevolent, the dwellers on the rugged edge are squeezed tighter. Human charity must take the place of natural beneficence. Shelter and food and warmth must be found for the weak and helpless. This, after all, is the biggest lesson of the cold snap.

The Rev. Mr. Linton, Socialist Mayor of Schenectady, was defeated for reelection Tuesday, and has refused to congratulate his successful opponent, Mr. Schoenck, who will doubtless be Mayor, just the same.

Get out into the country and enjoy the kaleidoscopic colors of the dying leaves while you can.

Writing about the possum is a good deal more common than the eating thereof.

The magnificent "Ben-Hur" company carries two cars of camels and beauty and wealth combined for good in this country, as they often are in England.

"What will women wear next?" asks a newspaper. What won't they wear next is the vital question.

The chestnut crop in the county is fairly good this season," says the Orange Observer. It's also rather large in the newspaper paragraphs just now.

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"Why does a middle-aged couple with no children still build a fourteen-room house? If there's anything in a name a girl makes it'll fit it out."

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